

# Golden Slippers

A COLLECTION OF NEGRO LITERATURE  
FOR YOUNG READERS

ARNA BONTEMPS

# GOLDEN SLIPPERS

Compiled by ARNA BONTemps

The best part of the Negro's contribution to American literature is still his poetry, and simple lyrical verse is the best of this poetry. However, the Negro's genius for the singing word goes back a hundred years before Dunbar. It survives from those times in the lyrics of the spirituals, in ballads like John Henry and in the work and play songs of the slaves. By the time that James Bland put his lively verses into minstrel songs like *Oh, Dem Golden Slippers*, a tradition was already established.

Langston Hughes is right in line when he writes:

I had ma clothes cleaned  
Just like new.  
I put 'em on but  
I still feels blue.

I bought a new hat,  
Sho is fine,  
But I wish I had back that  
Old gal o' mine.

I got new shoes—  
They don't hurt ma feet,  
But I ain't got nobody  
For to call me sweet.

Oddly enough, no attempt has previously been made to gather into a single volume a collection of the Negro poetry suited to young as well as adult readers. The poems here are selected for their entertainment value. They deal with stealing kisses, washing dishes, the creation of the world, rainy days, an incident on the streets of Baltimore—in short, all the things of which the Negro loves to sing.

*all drawings by Henrietta Sharon.*

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## *Golden Slippers*



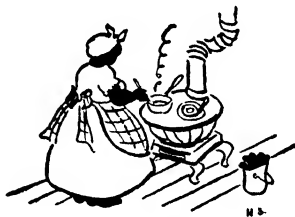


# Golden Slippers

*An Anthology of Negro Poetry  
for Young Readers*

Compiled by  
ARNA BONTEMPS

*With Drawings by*  
HENRIETTA BRUCE SHARON



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GOLDEN SLIPPERS

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To JOAN and PAUL  
*Who Helped*



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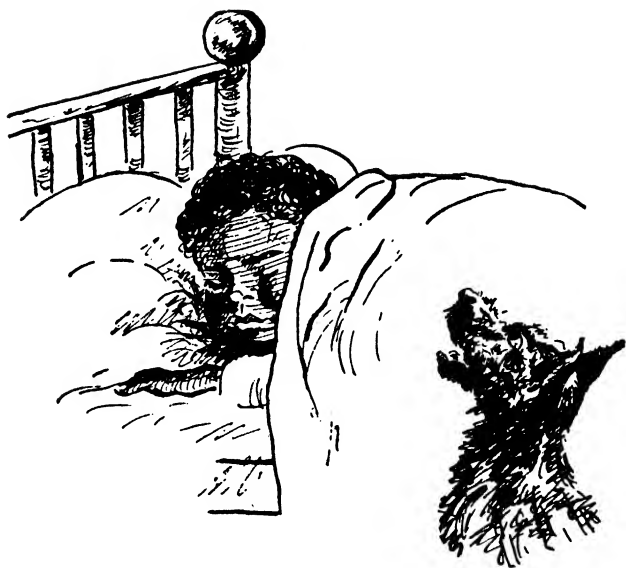
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## I. Waking Up





## *Dawn*

AN ANGEL, robed in spotless white,  
Bent down and kissed the sleeping Night.  
Night woke to blush; the sprite was gone.  
Men saw the blush and called it Dawn.

*Paul Laurence Dunbar*

## *“I Am Glad Daylong”*

I AM glad daylong for the gift of song,  
For time and change and sorrow;  
For the sunset wings and the world-end things  
Which hang on the edge of tomorrow.  
I am glad for my heart whose gates apart  
Are the entrance-place of wonders,  
Where dreams come in from the rush and din  
Like sheep from the rains and thunders.

*William Stanley Braithwaite*

## *In the Morning*

'Lias! 'Lias! Bless de Lawd!  
Don' you know de day's erbroad?  
Ef you don' git up, you scamp,  
Dey'll be trouble in dis camp.  
T'ink I gwine to let you sleep  
W'ile I meks yo' boa'd an' keep?  
Dat's a putty howdy-do—  
Don' you hyeah me, 'Lias—you?

Bet ef I come crost dis flo'  
You won' fin' no time to sno'.  
Daylight all a-shinin' in  
W'ile you sleep—w'y hit's a sin!  
Ain't de can'le-light enough  
To bu'n out widout a snuff,  
But you go de mo'nin' thoo  
Bu'in' up de daylight too?

'Lias, don' you hyeah me call?  
No use tu'nin' to'ds de wall;  
I kin hyeah dat mattuss squeak;  
Don' you hyeah me w'en I speak?  
Dis hyeah clock done struck off six—  
Ca'line, bring me dem ah sticks!  
Oh, you down, suh; huh, you down—  
Look hyeah, don' you daih to frown.

Ma'ch yo' se'f an' wash yo' face,  
Don' you splattah all de place;  
I got somep'n else to do,  
'Sides jes' cleanin' aftah you.  
Tek dat comb an' fix yo' haid—  
Looks jes' lak a feddah baid.  
Look hyeah, boy, I let you see  
You sha'n't roll yo' eyes at me.

Come hyeah; bring me dat ah strap!  
Boy, I'll whup you 'twell you drap;  
You done felt yo'se'f too strong,  
An' you sholy got me wrong.  
Set down at dat table thaih;  
Jes' you whimpah ef you daih!  
Evah mo'nin' on dis place  
Seem lak I mus' lose my grace.

Fol' yo' han's an' bow yo' haid—  
Wait ontwell de blessin' 's said;  
“Lawd, have mussy on ouah souls—”  
(Don' you daih to tech dem rolls—)  
“Bless de food we gwine to eat—”  
(You set still—I see yo' feet;  
You jes' try dat trick agin!)  
“Gin us peace an' joy. Amen!”

*Paul Laurence Dunbar*

## Midsummer Morn

A TOM-TOM sun awakens day's jungle with heat beats  
The moon was a white war canoe moored to the night  
Morning stars scurry to cover like shaking hares fearful  
    of the Great Yellow Hunter  
Last night's tall hunchback fishing in a pool of raven's  
    breasts is a green elm tree  
Thin wings of grass pound helplessly against hard  
    ground  
And the robins are no longer afraid. . . .

*Frank Marshall Davis*

## *Sassafras Tea*

THE sassafras tea is red and clear  
In my white china cup,  
So pretty I keep peeping in  
Before I drink it up.

I stir it with a silver spoon,  
And sometimes I just hold  
A little tea inside the spoon,  
Like it was lined with gold.

It makes me hungry just to smell  
The nice hot sassafras tea,  
And that's one thing I really like  
That they say's good for me.

*Mary Effie Lee Newsome*



## Youth

WE HAVE tomorrow  
Bright before us  
Like a flame.

Yesterday  
A night-gone thing,  
A sun-down name.

And dawn-today  
Broad arch above the road we came.

We march!

*Langston Hughes*



## II. Playtime





## *Did You Feed My Cow?*

"Did you feed my cow?"

"Yes, Mam!"

"Will you tell me how?"

"Yes, Mam!"

"Oh, what did you give her?"

"Corn an' hay."

"Oh, what did you give her?"

"Corn an' hay."

"Did you milk her good?"

"Yes, Mam!"

"Did you do like you should?"

"Yes, Mam!"

"Oh, how did you milk her?"

"Swish! Swish! Swish!"

"Oh, how did you milk her?"

"Swish! Swish! Swish!"

"Did that cow die?"

"Yes, Mam!"

"With a pain in her eye?"

"Yes, Mam!"

"Oh, how did she die?"

"Uh! Uh! Uh!"

"Oh, how did she die?"

"Uh! Uh! Uh!"

“Did the buzzards come?”

“Yes, Mam!”

“For to pick her bone?”

“Yes, Mam!”

“Oh, how did they come?”

“Flop! Flop! Flop!”

“Oh, how did they come?”

“Flop! Flop! Flop!”

*Traditional*

## *Bedbug*

THE June-bug's got the golden wing,  
The Lightning-bug the flame;  
The Bedbug's got no wing at all,  
But he gets there just the same.

The Pumpkin-bug's got a pumpkin smell,  
The Squash-bug smells the worst;  
But the perfume of that old Bedbug,  
It's enough to make you burst.

When that Bedbug come down to my house,  
I takes my walking cane.  
Go get a pot and scald him hot!  
Good-by, Miss Liza Jane!

*Traditional*

## *Precious Things*

HOLD my rooster, hold my hen,  
Pray don't touch my Grecian Bend.

Hold my bonnet, hold my shawl,  
Pray don't touch my waterfall.

Hold my hands by the finger tips,  
But pray don't touch my sweet little lips.

*Tradition*



## *I'm a Round-Town Gent*

I AIN'T no wagon, ain't no dray,  
Just come to town with a load of hay.  
I ain't no cornfield to go to bed  
With a lot of hayseeds in my head.  
I'm a round-town gent, and I don't choose  
To work in the mud and do without shoes.

*Traditional*

## Take Yo' Time, Miss Lucy

Miss Lucy she is handsome,  
Miss Lucy she is tall;  
To see her dance Cachuca,  
Jes' captivates us all.

Oh, Miss Lucy's teeth is grinnin',  
Jes' like an ear of corn;  
An' her eyes dey look so winnin',  
Oh! would I'd never been born.

Take yo' time, Miss Lucy,  
Take yo' time, Miss Lucy Long;  
Oh! take yo' time, Miss Lucy,  
Take yo' time, Miss Lucy Long.

I ax'd her for to marry  
Myself de other day;  
She said she'd rather tarry,  
So I let her have her way.

If she makes a scolding wife,  
As sure as she is born,  
I'll tote her down to Georgia,  
An' trade her off for corn.





Take yo' time, Miss Lucy,  
Take yo' time, Miss Lucy Long;  
Oh! take yo' time, Miss Lucy,  
Take yo' time, Miss Lucy Long.

*Traditional*

## Quoits

IN WINTERTIME I have such fun  
When I play quoits with father.  
I beat him almost every game.  
He never seems to bother.

He looks at mother and just smiles.  
All this seems strange to me,  
For when he plays with grown-up folks,  
He beats them easily.

*Mary Effie Lee Newsome*

### III. Clothes Lines and Water Pails







## Signs

I'M SURE that Spring is on the way.  
My Ma gave me a sign.  
She swept the heavy rugs today  
And hung them on the line.

*Beatrice M. Murphy*

## *The Baker's Boy*

THE baker's boy delivers loaves  
All up and down our street.  
His car is white, his clothes are white,  
White to his very feet.  
I wonder if he stays that way.  
I don't see how he does all day.  
I'd like to watch him going home  
When all the loaves are out.  
His clothes must look quite different then,  
At least I have no doubt.

*Mary Effie Lee Newsome*

## *The Serving Girl*

THE calabash wherein she served my food,  
Was smooth and polished as sandalwood:  
Fish, as white as the foam of the sea,  
Peppered, and golden fried for me.  
She brought palm wine that carelessly slips  
From the sleeping palm tree's honeyed lips.  
But who can guess, or even surmise  
The countless things she served with her eyes?

*Gladys May Casely Hayford*

## No Images

SHE does not know  
Her beauty,  
She thinks her brown body  
Has no glory.

If she could dance  
Under palm trees  
And see her image in the river  
She would know.

But there are no palm trees  
On the street,  
And dish water gives back no images.

*Waring Cuney*

## *I've Learned to Sing*

I'VE learned to sing a song of hope,  
I've said goodbye to despair,  
I caught the note in a thrush's throat,  
I sang—and the world was fair!  
I've learned to sing a song of joy  
It bends the skies to me,  
The song of joy is the song of hope  
Grown to maturity.

I've learned to laugh away my tears  
As through the dark I go  
For love and laughter conquer fears  
My heart has come to know.

I've learned a song of happiness  
It is a song of love  
For love alone is happiness  
And happiness is love.

*Georgia Douglas Johnson*



#### IV. *Hard Work*







## *Florida Road Workers*

I'M MAKIN' a road  
For the cars to fly by on,  
Makin' a road  
Through the palmetto thicket  
For light and civilization  
To travel on.  
I'm makin' a road  
For the rich old white men  
To sweep over in their big cars  
And leave me standin' here.

Sure,  
A road helps everybody!  
Rich folks ride—  
And I get to see 'em ride.  
Ain't never seen nobody  
Ride so fine before.

Hey, buddy!  
Look at me!  
I'm makin' a road!

*Langston Hughes*

## *John Henry*

SOME say he's from Georgia,  
Some say he's from Alabam,  
But it's wrote on the rock at the Big Ben Tunne  
That he's an East Virginia man,  
That he's an East Virginia man.

John Henry was a steel drivin' man,  
He died with a hammah in his han',  
Oh, come along boys and line the track  
For John Henry ain't never comin' back,  
For John Henry ain't never comin' back.

John Henry he could hammah,  
He could whistle, he could sing,  
He went to the mountain early in the mornin'  
To hear his hammah ring,  
To hear his hammah ring.

John Henry went to the section boss,  
Says the sections boss what kin you do?  
Says I can line a track, I kin histe a jack,  
I kin pick and shovel too,  
I kin pick and shovel too.

John Henry told the cap'n,  
When you go to town,

Buy me a nine-pound hammah  
An' I'll drive this steel drill down,  
An' I'll drive this steel drill down.

Cap'n said to John Henry  
You've got a willin' mind.  
But you just well lay yoh hammah down,  
You'll nevah beat this drill of mine,  
You'll nevah beat this drill of mine.

John Henry went to the tunnel  
And they put him in lead to drive,  
The rock was so tall and John Henry so small  
That he laid down his hammah and he cried  
That he laid down his hammah and he cried.

The steam drill was on the right han' side,  
John Henry was on the left,  
Says before I let this steam drill beat me down,  
I'll hammah myself to death,  
I'll hammah myself to death.

Oh the cap'n said to John Henry  
I bleeve this mountain's sinkin' in.  
John Henry said to the cap'n, Oh my!  
Tain't nothin' but my hammah suckin' wind,  
Tain't nothin' but my hammah suckin' wind.

John Henry had a cute liddle wife,  
And her name was Julie Ann,  
And she walk down the track and nevah look back,  
Goin' to see her brave steel drivin' man,  
Goin' to see her brave steel drivin' man.

John Henry was on the mountain,  
The mountain was so high,  
He called to his pretty liddle wife,  
Said Ah kin almos' touch the sky,  
Said Ah kin almos' touch the sky.

John Henry took his liddle boy,  
Sit him on his knee,  
Said that Big Ben Tunnel  
Gonna be the death of me,  
Gonna be the death of me.

John Henry ast that liddle boy,  
Now what are you gonna be?  
Says if I live and nothin' happen,  
A steel drivin' man I'll be,  
A steel drivin' man I'll be.

Then John Henry he did hammah,  
He did make his hammah soun',  
Says now one more lick fore quittin' time,  
An' I'll beat this steam drill down,  
An' I'll beat this steam drill down.

John Henry, O, John Henry!  
Blood am runnin' red!  
Falls right down with his hammah to the groun',  
Says, I've beat him to the bottom but I'm dead,  
I've beat him to the bottom but I'm dead.

John Henry, O, John Henry!  
Sing it if you can,—  
High and low and ev'ry where you go—  
He died with his hammah in his han',  
He died with his hammah in his han'.

They took John Henry to the White House,  
And buried him in the san',  
And every locomotive come roarin' by,  
Says there lays that steel drivin' man,  
Says there lays that steel drivin' man.

*Traditional*

## *John Henry in Harlem*

THE scabby walls of tenements  
Tower on either hand  
Like the wind-clawed sides  
Of a Dust Bowl canyon.

In the dream-dead street  
The heat waves dance  
Like ghosts upon a plagued river.

Stripped to the waist,  
His muscles knotted like ebony cords,  
Stillicho swings his mighty pick  
And his lusty ballad of John Henry  
Climbs the fire-trap tenements:

*John Henry said: "If you give me a drink  
I'll finish dis job befo' a cat kin wink.  
When Gawd made me, He made a man  
Who's de best pick driver in all de lan'."*

The sweat rolls down Stillicho's body,  
And the sweat rolls down his face,  
And the blur of the street scene wavers before his eyes,  
And the rag of the toiler wipes his face.

Stillichö thinks of his wife,  
The big pot of cabbage and ham-hock  
Waiting for him in the flat.

He sees pride shining in her eyes  
When he brings home his check, Saturday nights,  
And hides it where she can find it.

*John Henry he had a pretty wife,  
An' her name it was Polly Ann.  
She loved her home an' she loved her kid  
An' she loved her pickdrivin' man!*

Stillichö Spikes dreams of his son  
And the bright new watch he'll buy the lad  
When he finishes high school in June,  
The first of the Spikes to get a diploma.  
Didn't the principal say  
Junior was smart  
And perhaps he'd be a second Booker T.?

*John Henry he had a little boy,  
An' he was John Henry's pride an' joy.  
John Henry said, "He'll make a man  
As good as any in dis wide, wide lan'."*

The verve of his thoughts  
Makes his pick rise and fall  
Like the regal stick of a drum-major.

Stillichö looks at the slanting sun,  
Spits on his horny hands,  
Rubs them and grins.

*John Henry worked in all kinds of weather,  
'Cause a workin' man cain't do no better.  
John Henry said to just keep in motion  
Till you conquer de lan' an' conquer de ocean!*

M. B. Tolson



## *Song to a Negro Wash-Woman*

OH, WASH-WOMAN,  
Arms elbow-deep in white suds,  
Soul washed clean,  
Clothes washed clean,  
I have many songs to sing you  
Could I but find the words.

Was it four o'clock or six o'clock on a winter afternoon,  
I saw you wringing out the last shirt in Miss White  
Lady's kitchen? Was it four o'clock or six o'clock?  
I don't remember.

But I know, at seven one spring morning you were on  
Vermont Street with a bundle in your arms going to  
wash clothes.

And I know I've seen you in the New York subway in  
the late afternoon coming home from washing clothes.

Yes, I know you, wash-woman.

I know how you send your children to school, and  
high school, and even college.

I know how you work to help your man when times  
are hard.

I know how you build your house up from the washtub  
and call it home.

And how you raise your churches from white suds for  
the service of the Holy God.

I've seen you singing, wash-woman. Out in the back-  
yard garden under the apple trees, singing, hanging  
white clothes on long lines in the sunshine.

And I've seen you in church on Sunday morning sing-  
ing, praising your Jesus because some day you're  
going to sit on the right hand side of the Son of  
God and forget you ever were a wash-woman.

And the aching back and the bundles of clothes will be  
unremembered then.

Yes, I've seen you singing.

So for you,  
O singing wash-woman,  
For you, singing little brown woman,  
Singing strong black woman,  
Singing tall yellow woman,  
Arms deep in white suds,  
Soul washed clean,  
Clothes washed clean,  
For you I have  
Many songs to sing  
Could I but find the words.

*Langston Hughes*





## *Two-an'-Six*

MERRY voices chatterin',  
Nimble feet dem patterin',  
Big an' little, faces gay,  
Happy day dis market day.

Sateday, de marnin' break,  
Soon, soon market-people wake;  
An' de light shine from de moon  
While dem boy, wid pantaloons  
Roll up over dem knee-pan,  
'Tep across de buccra lan'  
To de pastur' whe' de harse  
Feed along wid de jackass,  
An' de mule cant' in de track  
Wid him tail up in him back,  
All de ketchin' to defy,  
No ca' how dem boy might try.

In de early marnin'-tide,  
When de cocks crow on de hill  
An' de stars are shinin' still,  
Mirrie by de fireside  
Hot's de coffee for de lads  
Comin' ridin' on de pads  
T'rown across dem animul—  
Donkey, harse too, an' de mule,

Which at last had come do'n cool.  
On de bit dem hol' dem full:  
Racin' ober pastur' lan',  
See dem comin' ebery man,  
Comin' fe de steamin' tea  
Ober hilly track an' lea.

Hard-wuk'd donkey on de road  
Trottin' wid him ushal load,  
Hamper pack' wi' yam an' grain,  
Sour-sop, and Gub'nor cane.

Cous' Sun sits in hired dray,  
Drivin' 'long de market way;  
Whole week grindin' sugar cane  
T'rough de boilin' sun an' rain,  
Now, a'ter de toilin' hard,  
He goes seekin' his reward,  
While he's thinkin' in him min'  
Of de dear ones lef' behin',  
Of de loved though ailin' wife,  
Darlin' treasure of his life,  
An' de picknies, six in all,  
Whose 'nuff burdens 'pon him fall:  
Seben lovin' ones in need,  
Seben hungry mouths te feed;  
On deir wants he thinks alone,  
Neber dreamin' of his own,

But gwin' on wid joyful face  
Till him re'ch de market-place.

Sugar bears no price today,  
Though it is de mont' o' May,  
When de time is hellish hot,  
An' de water cocoanut  
An' de cane bebridge is nice,  
Mix' up wid a lilly ice.

Big an' little, great an' small,  
Afou yam is all de call;  
Sugar tup an' gill a quart,  
Yet de people hab de heart  
Wantin' brater top o' i',  
Want de sweatin' higgler fe  
Ram de pan an' pile i' up,  
Yet sell i' fe so-so tup.

Cousin Sun is lookin' sad,  
As de market is so bad;  
'Pon him han' him res' him chin,  
Quietly sit do'n thinkin'  
Of de loved wife sick in bed,  
An' de children to be fed—  
What de laborers would say  
When dem know him couldn' pay;  
Also what about de mill

Whe' him hire from old Bill;  
So him think, an' think on so,  
Till him t'oughts no more could go.

Then he got up an' began  
Pickin' up him sugar-pan:  
In his ears rang t'rough de din  
"Only two-an'-six a tin'."  
What a tale he'd got to tell,  
How bad, bad de sugar sell!  
Tekin' out de lee amount,  
Him set do'n an' begin count  
All de time him min' deh doubt  
How expenses would pay out;  
h, it gnawed him like de ticks,  
ugar sell fe two-an'-six!

o he journeys on de way,  
eelin' sad dis market day;  
lo e'en buy a little cake  
'o gi'e baby when she wake—  
rassin' 'long de candy-shop  
'Douten eben mek a stop  
To buy drops fe las'y son,  
For de lilly cash nea' done.  
So him re'ch him own a groun',  
An' de children scamper roun',



Each one stretchin' out him han',  
Lookin' to de poor, sad man.

Oh, how much he felt de blow,  
As he watched dem face fall low,  
When dem wait an' nuttin' came,  
An' drew back deir han's wid shame!  
But de sick wife kissed his brow:  
"Sun, don't get down-hearted now;  
Ef we only pay expense  
We mus' wuk we common-sense,  
Cut an' carve, an' carve an' cut,  
Mek gill sarbe fe quattiwut;  
We mus' try mek two ends meet  
Neber mind how hard be it.  
We won't mind de haul an' pull,  
While dem pickny belly full."

An' de shadow lef' him face,  
An' him felt an inward peace,  
As he blessed his better part  
For her sweet an' gentle heart:  
"Dear one o' my heart, my breat',  
Won't I lub you to de deat'?  
When my heart is weak an' sad,  
Who but you can mek it glad?"

So dey kissed an' kissed again,  
An' deir t'oughts were not on pain,  
But was 'way down in de sout'  
Where dey'd wedded in deir you't',  
In de marnin' of deir life  
Free from all de grief an' strife,  
Happy in de marnin' light,  
Never thinkin' of de night.

So dey k'lated eberyt'ing;  
An' de profit it could bring,  
A'ter all de business fix',  
Was a princely two-an'-six.

*Claude McKay*

## *Tomorrow's Men*

CHILDREN today—tomorrow—men!  
A few more suns and moons and then  
Long limbed and sinewy they stand  
The manhood of our native land.

Show them the dignity of toil;  
Give them the mother-touch of soil;  
Teach them the cunning of the tool;  
As well as riddles of the school.

For wealth and favors fade away  
With fortune's frown within a day;  
But masters of a trade are free  
To re-secure their destiny.

Where is the man who dares to scorn  
The honest man to labor born?  
For Labor has her rugged peers  
Who glorify the gown she wears!

*Georgia Douglas Johnson*

## *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than  
the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln  
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its  
muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

*Langston Hughes*

## V. Chariot Wheels





## *The Creation*

*(A Negro Sermon)*

And God stepped out on space,  
And he looked around and said:  
I'm lonely—  
I'll make me a world.

And far as the eye of God could see  
Darkness covered everything,  
Blacker than a hundred midnights  
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,  
And the light broke,  
And the darkness rolled up on one side,  
And the light stood shining on the other,  
And God said: That's good!

Then God reached out and took the light in His hands.  
And God rolled the light around in His hands  
Until He made the sun;  
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.  
And the light that was left from making the sun  
God gathered it up in a shining ball  
And flung it against the darkness,  
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.  
Then down between

The darkness and the light  
He hurled the world;  
And God said: 'That's good!

Then God himself stepped down—  
And the sun was on His right hand,  
And the moon was on His left;  
The stars were clustered about His head,  
And the earth was under His feet.  
And God walked, and where He trod  
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out  
And bulged the mountains up.

Then He stopped and looked and saw  
That the earth was hot and barren.  
So God stepped over to the edge of the world  
And He spat out the seven seas—  
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed—  
He clapped His hands, and the thunders rolled—  
And the waters above the earth came down,  
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,  
And the little red flowers blossomed,  
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,  
And the oak spread out his arms,  
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,  
And the rivers ran down to the sea;



And God smiled again,  
And the rainbow appeared,  
And curled itself around His shoulder.

Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand  
Over the sea and over the land,  
And He said: Bring forth! Bring forth!  
And quicker than God could drop His hand,  
Fishes and fowls  
And beasts and birds  
Swam the rivers and the seas,  
Roamed the forests and the woods,  
And split the air with their wings.  
And God said: That's good!

Then God walked around,  
And God looked around  
On all that He had made.  
He looked at His sun,  
And He looked at His moon,  
And He looked at His little stars;  
He looked on His world  
With all its living things,  
And God said: I'm lonely still.

Then God sat down—  
On the side of a hill where He could think;  
By a deep, wide river He sat down;

With His head in His hands,  
God thought and thought,  
Till He thought: I'll make me a man!

Up from the bed of the river  
God scooped the clay;  
And by the bank of the river  
He kneeled Him down;  
And there the great God Almighty  
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,  
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,  
Who rounded the earth in the middle of His hand;  
This Great God,  
Like a mammy bending over her baby,  
Kneeled down in the dust  
Toiling over a lump of clay  
Till He shaped it in His own image;

Then into it He blew the breath of life,  
And man became a living soul.  
Amen. Amen.

*James Weldon Johnson*

## *Troubled Jesus*

MA JESUS  
Was a troubled man,  
Wid lots o' sorrow  
In His breast.  
Oh, He was weary  
When they laid Him  
In the tomb to rest.  
Po', good Jesus.

*Waring Cuney*

## Crucifixion

THEY howled 'til Pilate  
Sent dear Jesus out.  
Then they cursed Him  
An' knocked Him all about.

O brothers, O sisters,  
Think what those sinners done—  
Crucified the Lord's Son!  
Think, think . . . Oh, think . . . .

*Waring Cuney*

## Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

I LOOKED over Jordan, and what did I see  
Coming for to carry me home?  
A band of angels coming after me,  
Coming for to carry me home.

Oh, if you get there before I do,  
Coming for to carry me home,  
Tell all my friends I'm coming too,  
Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low, Sweet Chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.  
Swing low, Sweet Chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.

*Traditional*

## *The Gospel Train*

THE gospel train's a-coming,  
I hear it just at hand,  
I hear the car wheels moving  
And rumbling through the land.

Get on board, little chillun,  
Get on board, little chillun,  
Get on board, little chillun,  
There's room for many a mo'.

The fare is cheap and all can go,  
The rich and poor are there.  
No second class aboard this train,  
No difference in the fare.

Get on board, little chillun,  
Get on board, little chillun,  
Get on board, little chillun,  
There's room for many a mo'.

*Traditional*

## *Little David, Play on Yo' Harp*

LITTLE David was a shepherd boy,  
He killed Goliath and shouted for joy.

Little David, play on yo' harp,  
Hallelu, hallelu!  
Little David, play on yo' harp,  
Hallelu!

Joshua was the son of Nun,  
He never would stop till the work was done.

Little David, play on yo' harp,  
Hallelu, hallelu!  
Little David, play on yo' harp,  
Hallelu!

*Traditional*

## *Ma Lord*

MA LORD ain't no stuck-up man.  
Ma Lord, he ain't proud.  
When he goes a-walkin'  
He gives me his hand.  
"You ma friend," he 'lowed.

Ma Lord knowed what it was to work.  
He knowed how to pray.  
Ma Lord's life was trouble, too,  
Trouble every day.

Ma Lord ain't no stuck-up man.  
He's a friend o' mine.  
When He went to Heaben,  
His soul on fire,  
He tole me I was gwine.  
He said, "Sho you'll come wid Me  
An' be ma friend through eternity."

*Langston Hughes*



## *Who Is That A-Walking in the Corn?*

Who is that a-walking in the corn?  
I have looked to East and looked to West  
But nowhere could I find Him who walks  
Master's cornfield in the morning.

Who is that a-walking in the corn?  
Is it Joshua, the son of Nun?—  
Or King David come to fight the giant  
Near the cornfield in the morning?

Who is that a-walking in the corn?  
Is it Peter jangling Heaven's keys?—  
Or old Gabriel come to blow his horn  
Near the cornfield in the morning?

Who is that a-walking in the corn?  
I have looked to East and looked to West  
But nowhere could I find Him who walks  
Master's cornfield in the morning.

*Fenton Johnson*

## *The Lonely Mother*

OH, MY mother's moaning by the river,  
My poor mother's moaning by the river,  
For her son who walks the earth in sorrow.  
Long my mother's moaned beside the river,  
And her tears have filled an angel's pitcher:  
"Lord of Heaven, bring to me my honey,  
Bring to me the darling of my bosom,  
For a lonely mother by the river."

Cease, O mother, moaning by the river;  
Cease, good mother, moaning by the river.  
I have seen the star of Michael shining,  
Michael shining at the Gates of Morning.  
Row, O mighty angel, down the twilight,  
Row until I find a lonely woman,  
Swaying long beneath a tree of cypress,  
Swaying for her son who walks in sorrow.

*Fenton Johnson*

## *For My Grandmother*

THIS lovely flower fell to seed;  
Work gently sun and rain;  
She held it as her dying creed  
That she would grow again.

*Countee Cullen*

## *Miracles*

DOUBT no longer miracles,  
This spring day makes it plain  
A man may crumble into dust  
And straightway live again.

A jug of water in the sun  
Will easy turn to wine  
If love is stopping at the well  
And love's brown arms entwine.

And you who think him only man,  
I tell you faithfully  
That I have seen Christ clothed in rain  
Walking on the sea.

*Arna Bontemps*

## *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

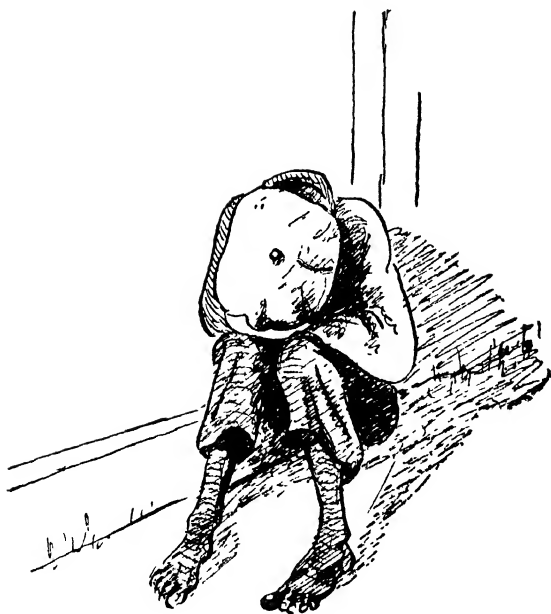
LIFT every voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught  
us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought  
us,  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun  
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been  
watered,  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of  
the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by Thy might  
Led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we  
met Thee,  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we  
forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand.  
True to our God,  
True to our native land.

*James Weldon Johnson*

## VI. *Feeling Blue*







## *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny*

CARRY me back to old Virginny,  
There's where the cotton and the corn and 'tatoes grow,  
There's where the birds warble sweet in the Springtime,  
There's where the old darky's heart am long'd to go.  
There's where I labor'd so hard for old Massa,  
Day after day in the field of yellow corn,  
No place on earth do I love more sincerely  
Than old Virginny, the state where I was born.

Carry me back to old Virginny,  
There let me live till I wither and decay,  
Long by the old Dismal Swamp have I wandered,  
There's where the old darky's life will pass away.  
Massa and Missus have long gone before me,  
Soon we will meet on that bright and golden shore,  
There we'll be happy and free from all sorrow,  
There's where we'll meet and we'll never part no more.

*James A. Bland*

## *Spring in New Hampshire*

Too green the springing April grass,  
Too blue the silver-speckled sky,  
For me to linger here, alas,  
While happy winds go laughing by,  
Wasting the golden hours indoors,  
Washing windows and scrubbing floors.

Too wonderful the April night,  
Too faintly sweet the first May flowers,  
The stars too gloriously bright,  
For me to spend the evening hours,  
When fields are fresh and streams are leaping,  
Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping.

*Claude McKay*

## *The Cricket and the Star*

I HEAR the little black cricket,  
I see the little white star.  
The star looks very small to me  
Because it is so far.  
If the cricket were that far way  
I'd never hear it night or day.

*Mary Effie Lee Newsome*

## *Home Thoughts*

OH SOMETHING just now must be happening there!  
That suddenly and quiveringly here,  
Amid the city's noises, I must think  
Of mangoes leaning o'er the river's brink,  
And dexterous Davie climbing high above,  
The gold fruits ebon-speckled to remove,  
And toss them quickly in the tangled mass  
Of wis-wis twisted round the guinea grass;  
And Cyril coming through the bramble-track  
A prize bunch of bananas on his back;  
And Georgie—none could ever dive like him—  
Throwing his scanty clothes off for a swim;  
And schoolboys, from Bridge-tunnel going home,  
Watching the waters downward dash and foam.  
This is no daytime dream, there's something in it,  
Oh something's happening there this very minute!

*Claude McKay*

## Youth

THE dew is on the grasses, dear,  
The blush is on the rose,  
And swift across our dial-youth,  
A shifting shadow goes.

The primrose moments, lush with bliss,  
Exhale and fade away,  
Life may renew the Autumn time,  
But nevermore the May!

*Georgia Douglas Johnson*

## *Four-Leaf Clover*

WHEN walking through the woods,  
So many times I think I've found a four-leaf clover.  
But like a dream—I stoop to find the dream is over—  
It's a three.

It does not hurt me in the woods—  
And would that when in life I've found a three-leaf  
    clover,  
And thought a four I would be able to discover,  
Resigned I'll be. . . .

*Wesley Curtright*

## VII. *Brown Boy and Girl*







## *Under the Mistletoe*

I DID not know she'd take it so,  
Or else I'd never dared;  
Although the bliss was worth the blow,  
I did not know she'd take it so.  
She stood beneath the mistletoe  
So long I thought she cared;  
I did not know she'd take it so,  
Or else I'd never dared.

*Countee Cullen*

## *Heart of the Woods*

DEEP into the woods we'll go,  
Hand in hand.  
Let the woods close about us,  
Let the world outside be lost—  
And let us find that Secret City  
Lost so long ago—  
In the Heart of the Woods.

*Wesley Curtright*





## Li'l' Gal

OH, DE weathah it is balmy an' de breeze is sighin' low.

Li'l' gal,

An' de mockin' bird is singin' in de locus' by de do',

Li'l' gal;

Dere's a hummin' an' a bummin' in de lan' f'om eas' to  
wes',

I's a-sighin' fu' you, honey, an' I nevah know no res'.

Fu' dey's lots o' trouble brewin' an' a-stewin in my breas',

Li'l' gal.

Whut's de mattah wid de weathah, whut's de mattah  
wid de breeze,

Li'l' gal?

Whut's de mattah wid de locus' dat's a-singin' in de  
trees,

Li'l' gal?

W'y dey knows dey ladies love 'em an' dey knows dey  
love 'em true,

An' dey love 'em back, I reckon, des' lak I's a-lovin' you;

Dat's de reason dey's a-weavin' an' a-sighin', thoo an'  
thoo,

Li'l' gal.

Don't you let no da'ky fool you 'cause de clo'es he waihs  
is fine,

Li'l' gal.

Dey's a hones' hea't a-beatin' unnerneaf dese rags o'  
mine,

Li'l' gal.

Cose dey ain't no use in mockin' whut de birds an'  
weathah do,

But I's so'y I cain't 'spress it w'en I knows I loves you  
true,

Dat's de reason I's a-sighin' an' a-singin' now fu' you,  
Li'l' gal.

*Paul Laurence Dunbar*

## The Hesitating Blues

HELLO, Central, what's the matter with this line?  
I want to talk to that high Brown of mine,  
Tell me, How long will I have to wait?  
Please give me 298. Why do you hesitate?  
What you say, "Can't talk to my Brown!  
A storm last night blowed the wires all down!"  
Tell me how long will I have to wait?  
Oh, won't you tell me now? Why do you hesitate?

*"Procrastination is the thief of time,"  
So all the wise owls say,  
"One stitch in time may save nine,"  
Tomorrow's not today  
And if you put off  
Somebody's bound to lose,  
I'd be his, he'd be mine,  
And I'd be feeling gay.  
Left alone to grieve and pine,  
My best friend's gone away.  
He's gone and left me  
The Hesitating Blues.*

Sunday night my beau proposed to me;  
Said he'd be happy if his wife I'd be,  
Said he, "How long will I have to wait?  
Come be my wife, my Kate. Why do you hesitate?"

*I declined him just for a stall;  
He left that night on the Cannon Ball.  
Honey, how long will I have to wait?  
Will you come back now  
Or will you hesitate?*

*W. C. Handy*

(Copyright W. C. Handy 1915)



## *Puck Goes to Court*

I WENT to court last night,  
Before me firefly light;  
And there was Lady Mab,  
On cheek a cunning dab  
Of rouge the sun set down,  
King Oberon with crown  
Of gold-eyed daisy buds  
Among potato spuds  
Was dancing roundelay  
With Lady Chloe and May.

I hid among the flowers  
And spent the wee young hours  
In mixing up the punch;  
For I was on a hunch  
That sober men are dull  
And fairy dust will lull  
To rest the plodding mind  
Worn down by life's thick grind.

The nobles drank the brew  
And called it sweetest dew;  
But when I left they lay  
Stunned by the light of day  
And Oberon had writ  
Decree that I must flit

A hundred leagues from court  
(Alas! Where is there sport?)

*Fenton Johnson*

## Sea Lyric

OVER the seas tonight, love,  
Over the darksome deeps,  
Over the seas tonight, love,  
Slowly my vessel creeps.

Over the seas tonight, love,  
Walking the sleeping foam—  
Sailing away from thee, love,  
Sailing from thee and home.

Over the seas tonight, love,  
Dreaming beneath the spars—  
Till in my dreams you shine, love,  
Bright as the listening stars.

*William Stanley Braithwaite*

## *After the Winter*

SOME day, when trees have shed their leaves  
And against the morning's white  
The shivering birds beneath the eaves  
Have sheltered for the night,  
We'll turn our faces southward, love,  
Toward the summer isle  
Where bamboos spire the shafted grove  
And wide-mouthed orchids smile.

And we will seek the quiet hill  
Where towers the cotton tree,  
And leaps the laughing crystal rill,  
And works the droning bee.  
And we will build a cottage there  
Beside an open glade,  
With black-ribbed bluebells blowing near,  
And ferns that never fade.

*Claude McKay*

## *Guardianship*

THAT dusky child upon your knee  
Is breath of God's eternity;  
Direct his vision to the height—  
Let naught obscure his royal right.

Although the highways to renown  
Are iron-barred by fortune's frown,  
'Tis his to forge the master-key  
That wields the locks of destiny!

*Georgia Douglas Johnson*

## To James

Do you remember  
How you won  
That last race?  
How you flung your body  
At the start . . .  
How your spikes  
Ripped the cinders  
In the stretch . . .  
How you catapulted  
Through the tape . . .  
Do you remember?  
Don't you think  
I lurched with you  
Out of those starting holes?  
Don't you think  
My sinews tightened  
At those first  
Few strides . . .  
And when you flew into the stretch  
Was not all my thrill  
Of a thousand races  
In your blood?  
At your final drive  
Through the finish line  
Did not my shout  
Tell of the

Triumphant ecstasy  
Of victory?  
Live  
As I have taught you  
To run, Boy—  
It's a short dash  
Dig your starting holes  
Deep and firm  
Lurch out of them  
Into the straightaway  
With all the power  
That is in you  
Look straight ahead  
To the finish line  
Think only of the goal  
Run straight  
Run high  
Run hard  
Save nothing  
And finish  
With an ecstatic burst  
That carries you  
Hurtling  
Through the tape  
To victory. . . .

*Frank Horne*





## VIII. Rain, Flood and Big Water





## *The Cotton Cat*

WITH button eyes and cotton skin  
How can a kitten sit and grin?  
With skin of striped calico  
And only thread between each toe—  
I've looked and found out, so I know!

It must feel funny for a cat  
To have its tail just painted flat.  
But when we're in because of snow  
I hold my toy at the window,  
And I forget the button eyes  
As we both watch the storm and skies.

*Mary Effie Lee Newsome*

## Rain

TODAY the rain  
is an aged man  
a gray old man  
a curious old man  
in a music store

Today houses  
are strings of a harp  
soprano harp strings  
bass harp strings  
in a music store

The ancient man  
strums the harp  
with thin long fingers  
attentively picking  
a weary jingle  
a soft jazzy jangle  
then dodders away  
before the boss comes 'round. . . .

*Frank Marshall Davis*

## *Dark Girl*

EASY on your drums,  
Easy wind and rain,  
And softer on your horns,  
She will not dance again.

Come easy little leaves  
Without a ghost of sound  
From the China trees  
To the fallow ground.

Easy, easy drums  
And sweet leaves overhead,  
Easy wind and rain;  
Your dancing girl is dead.

*Arna Bontemps*

## *Sailor*

HE SAT upon the rolling deck  
Half a world away from home,  
And smoked a Capstan cigarette  
And watched the blue waves tipped with foam.

He had a mermaid on his arm,  
An anchor on his breast,  
And tattooed on his back he had  
A blue bird in a nest.

*Langston Hughes*

## The Wakeupworld

This was the song of the Wakeupworld,  
The beautiful beast with long tail curled:

*"Wake up, O World; O World, awake!  
The light is bright on hill and lake;  
O World, awake; wake up, O World!  
The flags of the wind are all unfurled;  
Wake up, O World; O World, awake!  
Of earth's delightfulness partake.*

*Wake up, O World, whatever hour;  
Sweet are the fields, sweet is the flower!  
Wake up, O World; O World, awake;  
Perhaps to see the daylight break,  
Perhaps to see the sun descend,  
The night begin, the daylight end.*

*But something surely to behold,  
Not bought with silver or with gold,  
Not shown in any land of dreams.  
For open eyes the whole world teems  
With lovely things to do or make,  
Wake up, O World; O World, awake!"*

Such was the song of the Wakeupworld,  
The beautiful beast with long tail curled,

The Wakeupworld so swift and fleet,  
With twelve bright eyes and six strong feet.  
Such was the song he sang all day,  
Lest man or beast should sleep away  
The gift of Time, and never know  
The beauties of this life below.  
Twelve were his eyes, as I have said,  
Placed clockwise in his massive head.  
Never in any time or weather  
Were all those eyes shut tight together,  
But daily, at its certain hour,  
Each eye became possessed of power.

At one, an eye all pale and white  
Flew open for the day's first sight,  
And looked alone until at two  
There woke his wondering eye of blue.  
His eye of green at stroke of three  
Blazed like a jewel brilliantly;  
At four he opened up the red,  
And all around its lustre spread.  
Shyly then, as if all sleepy yet,  
At five peeped forth the violet.  
An eye of silver, chill and cold,  
The hour of six would then unfold.  
At seven with a sudden wink,  
He would let loose his eye of pink.  
At eight an eye so mild and mellow



Would gaze about; this one was yellow.  
Prompt at the stroke of nine they say  
Would twinkle forth his eye of gray.  
At ten, as merry as a clown,  
You could behold the laughing brown.  
Eleven strikes! And open flies  
An eye as black as midnight skies.  
And when the hour of twelve was tolled,  
And Time was one more half day old,  
He opened full his eye of gold.  
His twelve bright eyes he flashed around  
Till rainbows flecked the trees and ground!  
Oh, loveliest beast in song or story,  
The Wakeupworld in all his glory!

He could not sleep as others could;  
But for a moment in the wood  
Might stand and rest himself a mite,  
Then quickly would be off in flight,  
Crossing mountain, field, and lake,  
Bidding the drowsy world awake.  
Every hour some sleepyhead  
Would hear his song and leap from bed  
To open his eyes on some delight  
Of lovely day or beauteous night.

What would *you* give to see alive  
A Wakeupworld at half past five?

Could anything excite you more  
Than seeing him at exactly four,  
His eyes of white, blue, green, and red,  
Leaping like carlights from his head?  
Or watch each eye from hour to hour,  
Beginning at exactly one,  
Unfold its beauty like a flower,  
Till all those eyes were on the sun?  
'Twould take you half a day at least  
To get the most of such a feast!  
(He'd be the prize of any Zoo,  
If he were here, I think, don't you?)  
But never shall his like appear  
Again, and we shall never hear  
His song in lovely measures hurled  
At sleepyheads throughout the world.

Excitement robbed him of his breath,  
Excitement led him to his death.  
Flood morning when he could have been  
(Being awake) the first one in,  
Excitement made him play the dunce  
And open all his eyes at once!  
He rushed right on through dawn and dark  
Pointing late comers to the Ark.  
Too great the strain was for his heart;  
Slowly he sank; his great knees shook.  
While those his song had helped to start  
Passed on without a backward look.

The waters fell upon him there,  
His twelve bright eyes shining like one;  
They covered him, and none knew where  
To find him when the storm was done.

*Countee Cullen*

## *In Time of Silver Rain*

IN TIME of silver rain  
The earth  
Puts forth new life again,  
Green grasses grow  
And flowers lift their heads,  
And over all the plain  
The wonder spreads  
Of life, of life, of life!

In time of silver rain  
The butterflies lift silken wings  
To catch a rainbow cry,  
And trees put forth  
New leaves to sing  
In joy beneath the sky  
As down the roadway passing boys  
And girls go singing, too,  
In time of silver rain  
When spring  
And life are new.

*Langston Hughes*

IX. Dressed Up





## *When Sue Wears Red*

WHEN Susanna Jones wears red  
Her face is like an ancient cameo  
Turned brown by the ages.

Come with a blast of trumpets,  
Jesus!

When Susanna Jones wears red  
A queen from some time-dead Egyptian night  
Walks once again.

Blow trumpets, Jesus!

And the beauty of Susanna Jones in red  
Burns in my heart a love-fire sharp like pain.

Sweet silver trumpets,  
Jesus!

*Langston Hughes*

## “Little Brown Boy”

LITTLE brown boy,  
Slim, dark, big-eyed,  
Crooning love songs to your banjo  
Down at the Lafayette—  
Gee, boy, I love the way you hold your head,  
High sort of and a bit to one side,  
Like a prince, a jazz prince. And I love  
Your eyes flashing, and your hands,  
And your patent-leathered feet,  
And your shoulders jerking the jig-wa.  
And I love your teeth flashing,  
And the way your hair shines in the spotlight  
Like it was the real stuff.  
Gee, brown boy, I love you all over.  
I'm glad I'm a jig. I'm glad I can  
Understand your dancin' and your  
Singin', and feel all the happiness  
And joy and don't-care in you.  
Gee, boy, when you sing, I can close my ears  
And hear tomtoms just as plain.  
Listen to me, will you, what do I know  
About tomtoms? But I like the word, sort of,  
Don't you? It belongs to us.  
Gee, boy, I love the way you hold your head,  
And the way you sing and dance,  
And everything.







Say, I think you're wonderful. You're  
All right with me,  
You are.

*Helene Johnson*

## *Red*

SHE went to buy a brand new hat,  
And she was ugly, black, and fat:  
"This red becomes you well," they said,  
And perched it high upon her head.  
And then they laughed behind her back  
To see it glow against the black.  
She paid for it with regal mien,  
And walked out proud as any queen.

*Countee Cullen*

## *Dressed Up*

I HAD ma clothes cleaned  
Just like new.  
I put 'em on but  
I still feels blue.

I bought a new hat,  
Sho is fine,  
But I wish I had back that  
Old gal o' mine.

I got new shoes—  
They don't hurt ma feet,  
But I ain't got nobody  
For to call me sweet.

*Langston Hughes*

## Oh, Dem Golden Slippers

OH, MY golden slippers am laid away,  
Kase I don't 'spect to wear 'em till my weddin' day,  
An' my long tail'd coat, dat I love so well,  
I will wear up in de chariot in de morn.  
An' my long, white robe dat I bought las' June,  
I'm gwinter get it changed kase it fits too soon,  
An' de old gray horse dat I used to drive  
I will hitch up to de chariot in de morn.

Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Golden slippers I'm gwinter wear,  
Because dey look so neat;  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Golden slippers I'm gwinter wear,  
To walk de golden streets.

Oh, my old banjo hangs on de wall,  
Kase it ain't been tuned since way las' fall.  
But de darkies all say we will have a good time,  
When we ride up in de chariot in de morn.  
Dere's old Brother Ben an' Sister Luce,  
Dey will telegraph de news to Uncle 'Bacco Juice,  
What a great camp meetin' dere will be dat day.  
When we ride up in de chariot in de morn.







Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Golden slippers I'm gwinter wear,  
Because dey look so neat;  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Golden slippers I'm gwinter wear,  
To walk de golden streets.

Oh, my good-by, children, I will have to go,  
Where de rain don't fall or de wind don't blow,  
An' you' ulster coats, why, you will not need,  
When you ride up in de chariot in de morn.  
But de golden slippers mus' be neat an' clean,  
An' yo' age mus' be jes' sweet sixteen,  
An' yo' white kid gloves you will have to wear,  
When you ride up in the chariot in de morn.

Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Golden slippers I'm gwinter wear,  
Because dey look so neat;  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Oh, dem golden slippers!  
Golden slippers I'm gwinter wear,  
To walk de golden streets.

*James A. Bland*



## X. Big Cities





## *The Zulu King: New Orleans*

*(At Mardi Gras)*

THE ZULU King arrived at the new Basin  
Canal in his royal barge,  
Profusely decorated with palms and  
Surrounded by his brave warriors;  
A robust crew, with skin as glossy as  
Black satin.

They were robed in tawny tiger skins  
Armed with fantastic shields  
And pointed menacing spears.

The barbaric floats passed in review,  
A majestical parade.

Cheers rose from thousands of loyal  
Subjects on Rampart Street.

On one float stood a huge ebony kettle  
Containing a naked pot-bellied babe  
Simmering over a mock bush fire.

'Om-toms beat a steady monotonous tune.  
They stirred long buried savage impulses.  
The blood quickened in my pagan heart;  
Africa called to her own again.

*Josephine Copeland*

## Bottled: New York

UPSTAIRS on the third floor  
Of the 135th Street library  
In Harlem, I saw a little  
Bottle of sand, brown sand  
Just like the kids make pies  
Out of down at the beach.  
But the label said: "This  
Sand was taken from the Sahara desert."  
Imagine that! The Sahara desert!  
Some bozo's been all the way to Africa to get some sand.

And yesterday on Seventh Avenue  
I saw a Negro dressed fit to kill  
In yellow gloves and swallow-tail coat  
And twirling a cane. And everyone  
Was laughing at him. Me too,  
At first, till I saw his face  
When he stopped to hear a  
Organ grinder grind out some jazz.  
Boy! You should a seen that fellow's face!  
It just shone. Gee, he was happy!  
And he began to dance. No  
Charleston or Black Bottom for him.  
No sir. He danced just as dignified  
And slow. No, not slow either.  
Dignified and *proud*! You couldn't

Call it slow, not with all the  
Cuttin' up he did. You would a died to see him.

The crowd kept yellin' but he didn't hear,  
Just kept on dancin' and twirlin' that cane  
And yellin' out loud every once in a while.  
I know the crowd thought he was coo-coo.  
But say, I was where I could see his face,  
And somehow, I could see him dancin' in a jungle,  
A real honest-to-goodness jungle, and he wouldn't have  
on them

Trick clothes—those yellow shoes and yellow gloves  
And swallow-tail coat. He wouldn't have on nothing.  
And he wouldn't be carrying no cane.  
He'd be carrying a spear with a sharp fine point  
Like the bayonets we had "over there."  
And the end would be dipped in some kind of  
Hoodoo poison. And he'd be dancin' black and naked  
and gleaming.  
And he'd have rings in his ears and on his nose  
And bracelets and necklaces of elephants' teeth.  
Gee, I bet he'd be beautiful then all right.

No one would laugh at him then, I bet.  
Say! That man that took that sand from the Sahara  
desert  
And put it in a little bottle on a shelf in the library,

That's what they done to this dancer, ain't it? Bottled  
him.

Trick shoes, trick coat, trick cane, trick everything—all  
glass—

But inside—

Gee, that poor guy!

*Helene Johnson*



*When Dawn Comes to the City: New York*

THE tired cars go grumbling by,  
The moaning, groaning cars,  
And the old milk carts go rumbling by  
Under the same dull stars.  
Out of the tenements, cold as stone,  
Dark figures start for work;  
I watch them sadly shuffle on,  
'Tis dawn, dawn in New York.

But I would be on the island of the sea,  
In the heart of the island of the sea,  
Where the cocks are crowing, crowing, crowing,  
And the hens are cackling in the rose-apple tree,  
Where the old draft-horse is neighing, neighing, neigh-  
ing  
Out on the brown dew-silvered lawn,  
And the tethered cow is lowing, lowing, lowing,  
And dear old Ned is braying, braying, braying,  
And the shaggy Nannie goat is calling, calling, calling  
From her little trampled corner of the long wide lea  
That stretches to the waters of the hill-stream falling  
Sheer upon the flat rocks joyously!  
There, oh there! on the island of the sea,  
There I would be at dawn.

The tired cars go grumbling by,  
The crazy, lazy cars,  
And the same milk carts go rumbling by  
Under the dying stars.  
A lonely newsboy hurries by,  
Humming a recent ditty;  
Red streaks strike through the gray of the sky,  
The dawn comes to the city.

But I would be on the island of the sea,  
In the heart of the island of the sea,  
Where the cocks are crowing, crowing, crowing,  
And the hens are cackling in the rose-apple tree,  
Where the old draft-horse is neighing, neighing, neigh-  
ing  
Out on the brown dew-silvered lawn,  
And the tethered cow is lowing, lowing, lowing,  
And dear old Ned is braying, braying, braying,  
And the shaggy Nannie goat is calling, calling, calling  
From her little trampled corner of the long wide lea  
That stretches to the waters of the hill-stream falling  
Sheer upon the flat rocks joyously!  
There, oh there! on the island of the sea,  
There I would be at dawn.

*Claude McKay*

## *The Tropics in New York: New York*

BANANAS ripe and green, and ginger-root,  
Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,  
And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit,  
Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,

Set in the window, bringing memories  
Of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,  
And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies  
In benediction over nun-like hills.

My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;  
A wave of longing through my body swept,  
And, hungry for the old, familiar ways,  
I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.

*Claude McKay*

*Trip: San Francisco*

I WENT to San Francisco.  
I saw the bridges high  
Spun across the water  
Like cobwebs in the sky.

*Langston Hughes*

City: *San Francisco*

IN THE morning the city  
Spreads its wings  
Making a song  
In stone that sings.

In the evening the city  
Goes to bed  
Hanging lights  
About its head.

*Langston Hughes*

*Dawn Patrol: Chicago*

NIGHT creeps over the city;  
Streets spangle with kilowatt pearls,  
Lights splatter over seas of shadows  
Damming the flood of darkness.  
Drunken night,  
A hobo bowed over a bar of time,  
Brooding over a black bottle of stars  
Blinking like beer bubbles.  
Soon comes the police patrol of dawn,  
Night slowly staggers away  
And then the day.

*Richard V. Durham*

*Havana Dreams: Havana*

THE dream is a cocktail at Sloppy Joe's—  
(Maybe—nobody knows.)

The dream is the road to Batabano.  
(But nobody knows if that is so.)

Perhaps the dream is only her face—  
Perhaps it's a fan of silver lace—  
Or maybe the dream's a Vedado rose—  
(Quien sabe? Who really knows?)

*Langston Hughes*

## *Tenement Room: Chicago*

BRUISED and battered  
By the dark silent hammers of night,  
The day creeps  
Slowly  
From the tired room.

Dirt and destitution  
Lounge here in gaudy tatters  
Through the bright hours,  
Forever shouting  
Its bony nakedness—  
A crippled table, gray from greasy water;  
Two drooping chairs, spiritless as wounded soldiers  
shoved into a prison hole;  
A cringing bed, age-weary;  
Corseted with wire, squats a flabby stove,  
In this corner slumps a punished trunk;  
Through the lone window, broken-paned, light and  
weather spill on the dust-defeated and splintered  
floor.

Only night muffles  
These visual cries  
Of the despairing room.

The dusk  
Lays a soothing hand



On its whimpering poverty;  
Even the solitary gas jet  
Eases its quivering runners  
Of chromium light  
Along quiet surfaces  
As  
Exhausted  
The room sleeps dreamlessly. . . .

*Frank Marshall Davis*

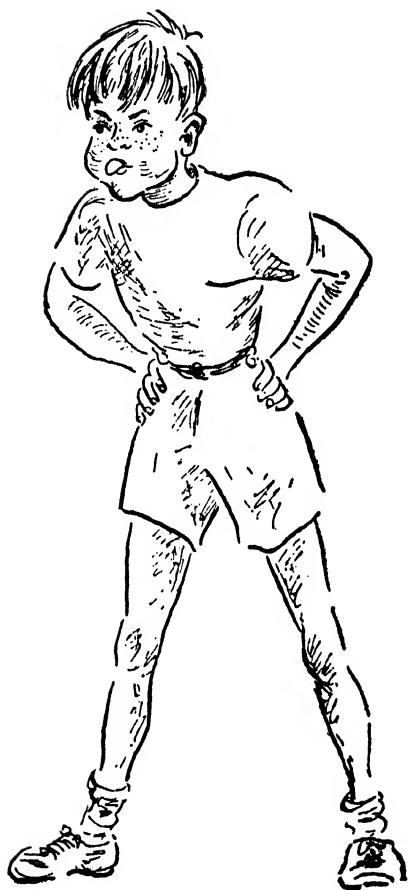
*Incident: Baltimore*

ONCE riding in old Baltimore,  
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,  
I saw a Baltimorean  
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,  
And he was no whit bigger,  
And so I smiled, but he poked out  
His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore  
From May until December;  
Of all the things that happened there  
That's all that I remember.

*Countee Cullen*





## *Rulers: Philadelphia*

It is said that many a king in troubled Europe would  
sell his crown for a day of happiness.

I have seen a monarch who held tightly the jewel of  
happiness.

On Lombard Street in Philadelphia, as evening dropped  
to earth, I gazed upon a laborer duskier than a sky  
devoid of moon. He was seated on a throne of flour  
bags, waving his hand imperiously as two small  
boys played on their guitars the ragtime tunes of  
the day.

God's blessing on the monarch who rules on Lombard  
Street in Philadelphia.

*Fenton Johnson*

## *Song of Hannibal: Rome*

*(Near the Gates of Rome)*

Out of the land of the burning sun—  
From Africa I come.  
Through the Alpine snow,  
To great Rome I go,  
And we halt when the goal is won—  
We shall camp in the streets of Rome.  
And where is her great army—  
Is each man safe at home?  
Ha! Ha! They dare not bar me!  
To Rome! On to Rome!

I knock  
And stand at your door and mock;  
So open wide the door,  
Or I shall burn and maim and slay  
Through Rome forevermore—  
Through Rome forevermore!

Whelp of the Lion of Carthage am I—  
Born of the Lion's Brood;  
And these men of silk—  
Will they give me milk  
When for nice, warm blood I cry—  
When I cry for nice, warm blood?

At the shrine of the Gods did I swear it  
Beneath my father's hand,  
With fire and sword to tear it—  
This land that would crush our land.

I laugh  
And your warriors fly like chaff—  
Dost, thus, thou me defy?  
Then die—die—die—die—die—  
Ye dogs of Rome must die!—  
Ye dogs of Rome must die!

*Marcus B. Christian*

## *Heaven: The City Called Heaven*

HEAVEN is  
The place where  
Happiness is  
Everywhere.

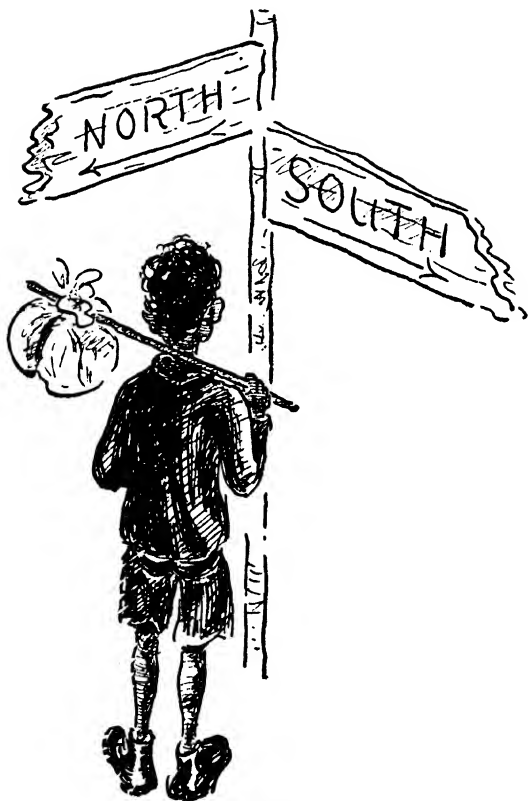
Animals  
And birds sing—  
As does  
Everything.

To each stone,  
“How-do-you-do?”  
Stone answers back,  
“Well! And you?”

*Langston Hughes*



## XI. North and South





## *The Spanish Needle*

LOVELY dainty Spanish needle  
With your yellow flower and white,  
Dew bedecked and softly sleeping,  
Do you think of me tonight?

Shadowed by the spreading mango,  
Nodding o'er the rippling stream,  
Tell me, dear plant of my childhood,  
Do you of the exile dream?

Do you see me by the brook's side  
Catching crayfish 'neath the stone,  
As you did the day you whispered:  
Leave the harmless dears alone?

Do you see me in the meadow  
Coming from the woodland spring  
With a bamboo on my shoulder  
And a pail slung from a string?

Do you see me all expectant  
Lying in an orange grove,  
While the swee-swees sing above me,  
Waiting for my elf-eyed love?

Lovely dainty Spanish needle,  
Source to me of sweet delight,  
In your far-off sunny southland  
Do you dream of me tonight?

*Claude McKay*

## The Snail

LITTLE snail,  
Dreaming you go.  
Weather and rose  
Is all you know.

Weather and rose  
Is all you see,  
Drinking the dewdrop's  
Mystery.

*Langston Hughes*

## *The Unknown Color*

I'VE often heard my mother say,  
When great winds blew across the day,  
And, cuddled close and out of sight,  
The young pigs squealed with sudden fright  
Like something speared or javelined,  
"Poor little pigs, they see the wind."

*Countee Cullen*

## *Dust Bowl*

THESE were our fields.  
Now no flower blooms,  
No grain grows here  
Where earth moves in every wind.

No birds nest in these trees.  
No fruit hangs  
Where the boughs stretch bare  
In the sun.

The dust sifts down—blows in.  
Our mouths are filled.  
The dust moves across,  
And up and around the dust moves

In our waking—our sleeping—  
In our dreams.

*Robert A. Davis*

## Northboun'

O' DE wurl' ain't flat,  
An' de wurl' ain't roun',  
Hit's one long strip  
Hangin' up an' down—  
Jes Souf an' Norf;  
Jes Norf an' Souf.

Talkin' 'bout sailin' 'roun' de wurl'—  
Huh! I'd be so dizzy my head 'ud twurl.  
If dis heah earf wuz jes' a ball  
You know the people all 'ud fall.

O' de wurl' ain't flat,  
An' de wurl' ain't roun',  
Hit's one long strip  
Hangin' up an' down—  
Jes Souf an' Norf;  
Jes Norf an' Souf.

Talkin' 'bout the City whut Saint John saw—  
Chile, you oughta go to Saginaw;  
A feller's chance is "finest kind,"  
An' pretty gals ain't hard to find.

Huh! de wurl' ain't flat,  
An' de wurl' ain't roun',



Jes' one long strip  
Hangin' up an' down.  
Since Norf is up,  
An' Souf is down,  
An' Hebben is up,  
I'm upward boun'.

*Ariel Williams Holloway*

## North and South

O SWEET are tropic lands for waking dreams!  
There time and life move lazily along.  
There by the banks of blue-and-silver streams  
Grass-sheltered crickets chirp incessant song,  
Gay-colored lizards loll all through the day,  
Their tongues outstretched for careless little flies,  
And swarthy children in the fields at play,  
Look upward laughing at the smiling skies.  
A breath of idleness is in the air  
That casts a subtle spell upon all things,  
And love and mating-time are everywhere,  
And wonder to life's commonplaces clings.  
The fluttering humming-bird darts through the trees  
And dips his long beak in the big bell-flowers,  
The leisured buzzard floats upon the breeze,  
Riding a crescent cloud for endless hours,  
The sea beats softly on the emerald strands—  
O sweet for quiet dreams are tropic lands!

*Claude McKay*

## *Drums of Haiti*

BEAT—beat—beat—drums—beat;  
Beat—beat—throb through the sweltering heat;  
Ominous throbbing thunder  
    Beating like drums of doom,  
Rhythm of pause and wonder,  
    Filling the air with gloom;  
Beat—beat—beat—drums—beat.

Beat—beat—beat—drums—beat;  
Beat—beat—over the cane-fields sweet;  
Beat through the sunshine and the rain,  
    Throb out your message of glorious birth;  
Call through the mountain and the plain  
    To black men scattered throughout the earth;  
Beat—beat—beat—drums—beat.

*Marcus B. Christian*



## XII. Folks





## *Sister Lou*

HONEY

When de man  
Calls out de las' train  
You're gonna ride,  
Tell him howdy.

Gather up yo' basket  
An' yo' knittin' an' yo' things,  
An' go on up an' visit  
Wid frien' Jesus fo' a spell.

Show Marfa  
How to make yo' greengrape jellies,  
An' give po' Lazarus  
A passel of them Golden Biscuits.

Scald some meal  
Fo' some rightdown good spoonbread  
Fo' li'l box-plunkin' David.

An' sit aroun'  
An' tell them Hebrew Chillen  
All yo' stories. . . .

Honey  
Don't be feared of them pearly gates,

Don't go 'round to de back,  
No mo' dataway  
Not evah no mo'.

Let Michael tote yo' burden  
An' yo' pocketbook an' evahthing  
'Cept yo' Bible,  
While Gabriel blows somp'n  
Solemn but loudsome  
On dat horn of his'n.

Honey  
Go straight on to de Big House,  
An' speak to yo' God  
Widout no fear an' tremblin'.

Then sit down  
An' pass de time of day awhile.

Give a good talkin' to  
To yo' favorite 'postle Peter,  
An' rub the po' head  
Of mixed-up Judas,  
An' joke awhile wid Jonah.

Then, when you gits de chance,  
Always rememberin' yo' raisin',  
Let 'em know youse tired  
Jest a mite tired.



Jesus will find yo' bed for you  
Won't no servant evah bother wid yo' room.  
Jesus will lead you  
To a room wid windows  
Openin' on cherry trees an' plum trees  
Bloomin' everlastin'.

An' dat will be yours  
Fo' keeps.

Den take yo' time . . .  
Honey, take yo' bressed time.

*Sterling Brown*

## *Aunt Jane Allen*

STATE STREET is lonely today. Aunt Jane Allen has  
driven her chariot to Heaven.

I remember how she hobbled along, a little woman,  
parched of skin, brown as the leather of a satchel  
and with eyes that had scanned eighty years of  
life.

Have those who bore her dust to the last resting place  
buried with her the basket of aprons she went up  
and down State Street trying to sell?

Have those who bore her dust to the last resting place  
buried with her the gentle word *Son* that she gave  
to each of the seed of Ethiopia?

*Fenton Johnson*

## *The Banjo Player*

THERE is music in me,  
the music of a peasant people.  
I wander through the levee, picking my banjo  
and singing my songs of the cabin and the field.  
At the Last Chance Saloon I am as welcome as the  
violets in March;  
there is always food and drink for me there,  
and the dimes of those who love honest music.  
Behind the railroad tracks the little children  
clap their hands and love me as they love  
Kris Kringle.  
But I fear that I am a failure.  
Last night a woman called me a troubadour.  
What is a troubadour?

*Fenton Johnson*

## *Alabama Earth*

*(At Booker Washington's grave)*

DEEP in Alabama earth  
His buried body lies—  
But higher than the singing pines  
And taller than the skies  
And out of Alabama earth  
To all the world there goes  
The truth a simple heart has held  
And the strength a strong hand knows,  
While over Alabama earth  
These words are gently spoken:  
Serve—and hate will die unborn.  
Love—and chains are broken.

*Langston Hughes*

## “ I Think I See Her ”

“I can remember when I was a little, young girl, how my old mammy would sit out of doors in the evenings and look up at the stars and groan, and I would say, ‘Mammy, what makes you groan so?’ And she would say, ‘I am groaning to think of my poor children; they do not know where I be and I don’t know where they be. I look up at the stars and they look up at the stars!’ ”—  
*Sojourner Truth*

I THINK I see her sitting bowed and black,  
Stricken and seared with slavery’s mortal scars,  
Reft of her children, lonely, anguished, yet  
Still looking at the stars.

Symbolic mother, we thy myriad sons,  
Pounding our stubborn hearts on Freedom’s bars,  
Clutching our birthright, fight with faces set,  
Still visioning the stars!

*Jessie Fauset*

*For a Lady I Know*

SHE even thinks that up in heaven  
Her class lies late and snores,  
While poor black cherubs rise at seven  
To do celestial chores.

*Countee Cullen*







*For Paul Laurence Dunbar*

BORN of the sorrowful of heart  
Mirth was a crown upon his head;  
Pride kept his twisted lips apart  
In jest, to hide a heart that bled.

*Countee Cullen*

## *Mother to Son*

WELL, son, I'll tell you:  
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
It's had tacks in it,  
And splinters,  
And boards torn up,  
And places with no carpet on the floor—  
Bare.  
But all the time  
I'se been a-climbin' on,  
And reachin' landin's,  
And turnin' corners,  
And sometimes goin' in the dark  
Where there ain't been no light.  
So, boy, don't you turn back.  
Don't you set down on the steps  
'Cause you finds it kinder hard.  
Don't you fall now—  
For I'se still goin', honey,  
I'se still climbin',  
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

*Langston Hughes*

## *After Winter*

HE SNUGGLES his fingers  
In the blacker loam  
The lean months are done with.  
The fat to come.

His eyes are set  
On a brushwood-fire  
But his heart is soaring  
Higher and higher.

Though he stands ragged  
An old scarecrow.  
This is the way  
His swift thoughts go,

*"Butter beans fo' Clara  
Sugar corn fo' Grace  
An' fo' de little feller  
Runnin' space.*

*"Radishes and lettuce  
Eggplants and beets  
Turnips fo' de winter  
An' candied sweets.*

*"Homespun tobacco  
Apples in de bin  
Fo' smokin' an' fo' cider  
When de folks draps in."*

He thinks with the winter  
His troubles are gone;  
Ten acres unplanted  
To raise dreams on.

The lean months are done with,  
The fat to come.  
His hopes, winter wanderers,  
Hasten home.

*"Butterbeans fo' Clara  
Sugar corn fo' Grace  
An' fo' de little feller  
Runnin' space. . . ."*

Sterling Brown

### XIII. Sky Pictures





## Garment

THE clouds weave a shawl  
Of downy plaid  
For the sky to put on  
When the weather's bad.

*Langston Hughes*

## *The Road*

AH, LITTLE road, all whirry in the breeze,  
A leaping clay hill lost among the trees,  
The bleeding note of rapture streaming thrush  
Caught in a drowsy bush  
And stretched out in a single singing line of dusky song.  
Ah, little road, brown as my race is brown,  
Your trodden beauty like our trodden pride,  
Dust of the dust, they must not bruise you down.  
Rise to one brimming golden, spilling cry!

*Helene Johnson*



## *Sky Pictures*

SOMETIMES a right white mountain  
Or great soft polar bear,  
Or lazy little flocks of sheep  
Move on in the blue air.  
The mountains tear themselves like floss,  
The bears all melt away.  
The little sheep will drift apart  
In such a sudden way.  
And then new sheep and mountains come.  
New polar bears appear  
And roll and tumble on again  
Up in the skies so clear.  
The polar bears would like to get  
Where polar bears belong.  
The mountains try too hard to stand  
In one place firm and strong.  
The little sheep all want to stop  
And pasture in the sky,  
But never can these things be done,  
Although they try and try!

*Mary Effie Lee Newsome*

## *Pastorale*

A WILLOW tree leans far over the brook  
Dipping its branches in the cool water  
Like a woman who washes her hair over a deep pool  
And muses on her reflection there.

The landscape now is dim and shimmering.  
Nature's soul pauses to worship  
Like a hooded nun telling her beads  
In the twilight of a vast cathedral.

*Robert A. Davis*

## *Palace.*

A SEA shell is a palace  
Where many echoes dwell,  
And when I listen to them  
I know them all quite well.  
They are like the ocean's roar  
Where the sea shell buried deep  
Learns why the sea is always salt,  
And spooky shadows creep.

*Dorothy Vena Johnson*

## *Cycle*

So MANY little flowers  
Drop their tiny heads  
But newer buds come to bloom  
In their place instead.

I miss the little flowers  
That have gone away,  
But the newly budding blossoms  
Are equally gay.

*Langston Hughes*

## *The Daybreakers*

WE ARE not come to wage a strife  
With swords upon this hill;  
It is not wise to waste the life  
Against a stubborn will.  
Yet would we die as some have done:  
Beating a way for the rising sun.

*Arna Bontemps*

## Winter Sweetness

THIS little house is sugar.  
Its roof with snow is piled,  
And from its tiny window  
Peeps a maple-sugar child.

*Langston Hughes*







## Twinkling Gown

THE pale dressed evening star  
Puts on, when it is night,  
A twinkling yellow gown  
In which to shine its light.

It sparkles in the darkness  
Like a firefly at play.  
But soon it softly fades until  
At last we see the day.

I do not really understand  
Why in dark night, a star  
Should gleam, and then turn dull  
When dawn creeps from afar.

*Dorothy Vena Johnson*

## Sight

I SEE skies more bright and blue  
Than any skies beheld by you,  
I see trees so tall and high  
Their green leaves brush against the sky,  
I see birds (and hear them sing)  
Like rainbows that have taken wing;  
I see flowers fairer far  
Than any in your garden are,  
These lovely sights you'll never find,  
Because—my dear, you *see*; I'm *blind*.

*Cora Ball Moton*

## *Benediction*

Go forth, my son,  
Winged by my heart's desire!  
Great reaches, yet unknown,  
Await  
For your possession.  
I may not, if I would,  
Retrace the way with you,  
My pilgrimage is through,  
But life is calling you!  
Fare high and far, my son,  
A new day has begun,  
The star-ways must be won!

*Georgia Douglas Johnson*



#### XIV. *Sleep and Dreams*





## Lullaby

BEDTIME's come fu' little boys.

Po' little lamb.

Too tiahed out to make a noise,

Po' little lamb.

You gwine t' have to-morrer sho'?

Yes, you tole me dat befo',

Don't you fool me, chile, no mo',

Po' little lamb.

You been bad de livelong day,

Po' little lamb.

Th'owin' stones an' runnin' 'way,

Po' little lamb.

My, but you's a-runnin' wil',

Look jes' lak some po' folks chile;

Mam' gwine whup you atter while,

Po' little lamb.

Come hyeah! you mos' tiahed to def,

Po' little lamb.

Played yo'se'f clean out o' bref,

Po' little lamb.

See dem han's now—sich a sight!

Would you evah b'lieve dey's white?

Stan' still twell I wash 'em right,

Po' little lamb.

Jes' cain't hol' yo' haid up straight,  
Po' little lamb.  
Hadn't oughter played so late,  
Po' little lamb.  
Mammy do' know whut she'd do,  
Ef de chillun's all lak you;  
You's a caution now fu' true,  
Po' little lamb.

Lay yo' haid down in my lap,  
Po' little lamb.  
Y' ought to have a right good slap,  
Po' little lamb.  
You been runnin' roun' a heap.  
Shet dem eyes an' don't you peep.  
Dah now, dah now, go to sleep,  
Po' little lamb.

*Paul Laurence Dunbar*



## Bats

I'D REALLY hate to go to bed  
Just swinging from some wall.  
But bats, they say, do just that way.  
I'd not wish to at all.  
I'd hate to swing down from my toes,  
All upside-down, and try to doze.

*Mary Effie Lee Newsome*

## *Dreams*

HOLD fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.

*Langston Hughes*

## *It's a Long Way*

It's a long way the sea-winds blow  
Over the sea-plains blue,—  
But longer far has my heart to go  
Before its dreams come true.

It's work we must, and love we must,  
And do the best we may,  
And take the hope of dreams in trust  
To keep us day by day.

It's a long way the sea-winds blow—  
But somewhere lies a shore—  
Thus down the tide of Time shall flow  
My dreams forevermore.

*William Stanley Braithwaite*

## *My Little Dreams*

I'M FOLDING up my little dreams  
Within my heart tonight,  
And praying I may soon forget  
The torture of their sight.  
For Time's deft fingers scroll my brow  
With fell relentless art—  
I'm folding up my little dreams  
Tonight, within my heart!

*Georgia Douglas Johnson*

## *For a Poet*

I HAVE wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth,  
And laid them away in a box of gold;  
Where long will cling the lips of the moth,  
I have wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth;  
I hide no hate; I am not even wroth  
Who found earth's breath so keen and cold;  
I have wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth,  
And laid them away in a box of gold.

*Countee Cullen*



SHARON

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## Biographies

JAMES A. BLAND (1854-1911) was born in Flushing, Long Island. His parents were free South Carolina folk from Charleston; and his father, Allen M. Bland, was one of the first American Negroes to hold a college degree. Young Bland attended Howard University in Washington, D. C., and worked as a page boy in the House of Representatives. As a college student he was remembered by his classmates more for his banjo playing than for his scholarship. It seemed only natural that he should become a minstrel man upon leaving school. Old minstrel fans remember him as the tall, dark and very striking bandmaster of the *Georgia Minstrels*, but his greatest fame was won in England. There for twenty years he was end-man in a company of white minstrels. King Edward VII was particularly fond of his performances. When his career as a minstrel ended, James A. Bland was temporarily forgotten. He was penniless when he died in 1911. A quarter of a century later his grave was discovered in the Merion Cemetery outside Philadelphia. It was weed-covered and unkept. Meanwhile, though the world had forgotten the name of James A. Bland, it had not forgotten such songs as "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny" and "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers." A group of the composer's admirers moved his grave, erected a singing tower above it and hailed again the man whose songs are second only to those of Stephen Foster in the hearts of Americans. Fifty-three songs are listed in the Library of Congress under the name of James A. Bland.

ARNA BONTEMPS (1902- ) was born in Alexandria, Louisiana, but most of his early years were spent in Cali-



ifornia. He attended elementary and secondary schools in and around Los Angeles and college at U. C. L. A. and at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California, receiving a degree from the latter in 1923. Since then he has studied at Columbia University in New York City and at the University of Chicago. His books include *God Sends Sunday*, *Black Thunder* and *Drums at Dusk*, novels, and *You Can't Pet a Possum* and *Sad-Faced Boy*, juveniles. He collaborated with Langston Hughes on *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti*, and he is the editor of *Father of the Blues*, the autobiography of W. C. Handy.

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE (1878- ) was born in Boston, but his ancestry is British. His father and grandfather were both men of standing in the West Indies. Braithwaite, despite the place of his birth and the classical turn of his mind, is mainly self-educated. He is the author of three volumes of poetry, but he is more widely known as a critic and an anthologist. For a number of years he was on the literary editorial staff of the *Boston Transcript*. More recently he has been a member of the English faculty of Atlanta University. In 1918 he was awarded the Spingarn Medal. His books of poetry are *Lyrics of Life*, *The House of Falling Leaves* and *Sandy Star and Willie Gee*. His anthologies include *The Book of Elizabethan Verse*, *The Book of Georgian Verse*, *The Book of Restoration Verse* and a series of yearly anthologies of magazine verse, begun in 1913. He is also author of *The Lyric Year*, *The Story of the Great War* and a serialized autobiography.

STERLING A. BROWN (1901- ) was born in Washington, D. C. He went to public schools in that city. Later he attended Williams College, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year. After graduation he

went to Harvard University for an M.A. This required only one year. Since then he has had a distinguished career as a professor of English, principally at Howard University. His writing has kept pace. His first published book, a volume of poems called *Southern Road*, won him a Guggenheim fellowship. He has since written several books of criticism dealing with the Negro in American literature. He served as adviser on Negro studies in the Federal Writers' Project. That he is still in the midst of widespread creative and scholarly activities is indicated by the simultaneous announcement of three new books by him, books ranging from an anthology of writings by Negroes to a book of observations on the Southern scene.

MARCUS B. CHRISTIAN (1900- ) was born near Houma, Louisiana, the fourth child in a family of six. His father was a rural school teacher. His grandfather had been a director of public schools in Lafourche Parish during the Reconstruction. So it is not strange that one of Christian's first memories should be of his father reading poetry to the children of the family in French. It was at his father's school that he acquired most of his early education. When the boy was thirteen, however, things took a turn. His father died, as his mother had a few years earlier, and Christian went to work. In 1917 he moved to New Orleans with his brothers and sister. Since then he has attended night schools and taken advantage of some private coaching. There is some good evidence that he made the most of both. He worked as a chauffeur for several years in New Orleans. Later he conducted a cleaning and pressing business. He closed the business in 1936—thanks to the depression—and entered the Federal Writers' Project. In time he was made a Unit Supervisor. He is fond of music, books, old documents and dogs, but his special love is

Louisiana and Negro history. On the side, he does competent bone-carving, wood-work, bookbinding, printing, linoleum block work and work in copper and brass. His poems have appeared in many periodicals.

JOSEPHINE COPELAND was born in Covington, Louisiana, a small resort about sixty miles from New Orleans. The fifth child in a family of six, and living in a community where the school term was short, her education was gained with difficulty. But she loved to read from childhood. Neighbors let her borrow their books, and in time she passed the entrance examination to McDonagh 35 High School in New Orleans. Mornings and evenings, before and after school, she worked. After graduation she attended evening classes at Dillard University and completed a two-year teacher's training course. Lately she has made her home in Chicago.

COUNTEE CULLEN (1903- ) has been winning laurels since he was a child. Born and educated in New York City, he won enough scholastic medals and citations to decorate a rather stout general. In high school he was a stand-out, and one of his first poems, "I Have a Rendezvous With Life," not only won a city-wide contest, but was quoted from prominent pulpits and reprinted many times. It was as a college student at New York University, however, that Cullen won a real place among American poets. So loud and hearty were the voices raised in praise of his magazine contributions that he almost stole the spotlight from an undefeated football team. The college paper published an article comparing the achievements of the two. Cullen's Phi Beta Kappa key was a foregone conclusion; it surprised no one. His first book of poems appeared the year he graduated. The next year he went to Harvard

University for his M.A. Then followed a Harmon Gold Award for literature, second and third books of poems, a Guggenheim fellowship, two years in Europe and more books. In recent years he has taught French in the schools of New York City. He is the author of *Color*, *Copper Sun*, *Ballad of the Brown Girl*, *Caroling Dusk*, *The Black Christ*, *The Medusa and Some Poems*, *One Way to Heaven* and (with Christopher Cat) *The Lost Zoo*.

WARING CUNEY (1906- ) has a musical background. Born in Washington, D. C., he attended the public schools of his native city. Later he went to Howard and Lincoln Universities. At Lincoln he became interested in singing, and his work in the Glee Club and the Quartet encouraged further study. Later he studied voice at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. A chance meeting with Langston Hughes on a street car in Washington seems to mark the starting point of his writing. Which only goes to show that poetry is "catching." Cuney's poem "No Images" won a first prize in an *Opportunity* contest. He has since contributed frequently to periodicals and anthologies. He lives in New York City.

WESLEY CURTRIGHT's mother brought her children to Harlem when he was just ready for high school. One of his first acts in that new and wonderful environment was the following autobiographical fragment:

I was born in Brunswick, Georgia,  
Beside the seashore fair;  
Born in Brunswick, Georgia,  
And would like to go back there,  
  
To visit old, old Brunswick,  
That birthplace of mine.

But to think of going there to live,  
I should now decline.

A brilliant student, college was interrupted for him by the depression. He is now a clerk in the New York State Civil Service, but his leisure is devoted to solitude and quiet study: books are a-birthing. The date of his birth: November 30, 1910.

FRANK MARSHALL DAVIS (1905- ) jumped the gun on his teachers and learned to read before entering school at the age of five. Before he was eight he had read *Les Misérables*—both volumes. From then on there was no holding him where books and reading were concerned. He was born in Arkansas City, Kansas, and attended school there till he was ready for Kansas State College. At State College he studied journalism, part of the time on a Sigma Delta Chi scholarship. Big enough to be a football tackle, he spent some of his summers working on farms and with street construction gangs. In 1931 he went to Atlanta and helped to start the *Atlanta Daily World*. He worked as editor of the *World* until 1934. The following year he became feature editor of the Associated Negro Press, a position he still holds. His poetry dates back to his second year in college. Since then it has earned him a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship in poetry and resulted in the publication of several books, among them *Black Man's Verse*, *I am the American Negro*, *Through Sepia Eyes* and the forthcoming *47th Street*.

ROBERT A. DAVIS (1917- ) was born in Mobile, Alabama. Seven years later the family moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee. After another seven years, both parents having died, the children were taken to Chicago to live with relatives. It was as a high school student in that northern city

that young Davis commenced writing poetry. He has since contributed to numerous periodicals and given successful public readings of his lyrics. Interested in the theatre, he has taken acting, singing and dancing parts in various amateur productions in the Chicago area. He graduated from the Wendell Phillips high school and has had one year at the University of Chicago and a semester at the Chicago Christian Junior College.

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR (1872-1906) was an elevator boy in Dayton, Ohio, when he began writing the poems which made him famous. Before long he found that he had written enough to make a small volume. These he collected under the title *Oak and Ivy* and then published them in book form at his own expense. This was a humble start for the poet, and nothing much came of it; but two years later, when his second book was ready, Dunbar found that he had won friends and supporters. Moreover, William Dean Howells wrote a remarkable criticism of the poems for *Harper's Weekly* and thereby brought the young poet to the attention of American readers in general. That put Dunbar on the ladder. From then on he climbed steadily. Book followed book. He was a hard worker. He wrote "Clorinda" for the Broadway musical stage. He contributed short stories to *The Saturday Evening Post*. He wrote novels. He traveled abroad, and he won the friendship of men like Coleridge Taylor, Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass. But most important of all, he continued to write the kind of poetry that the world had come to expect of him. The sum of his work seems large when it is recalled that he died at thirty-three. Born in Dayton, he was educated in the public schools of that city. In high school he was chosen editor of the school paper. He graduated just before his nineteenth birthday. Dunbar's books of poetry

include, in addition to *Oak and Ivy*, *Majors and Minors*, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, *Lyrics of the Hearthside*, *Lyrics of Sunshine and Shadow*, several illustrated editions of these volumes and the *Collected Poems*. His novels, *The Uncalled*, *The Fanatics*, *The Love of Landry* and *The Sport of the Gods*.

RICHARD V. DURHAM (1917- ) can hold his own in a boxing ring. He won a sectional championship and an impressive medal in a Chicago Golden Gloves tournament a few years ago. During the two years that followed he boxed as a professional. By that time he had begun writing poems, one of which, "Cotton Croppers," won second prize in a poetry contest sponsored by Mundelien College and Northwestern University. With the poetry prize in one hand, as it were, and the Golden Gloves medal in the other, the boy made his decision in favor of poetry. Since that time he has been attending Northwestern, contributing poems to magazines and newspapers and pursuing an ambition to become a writer of radio scripts. He was born in Jackson, Mississippi. When Durham was ten years old his parents moved to Chicago with their eight children. There he attended the Frances Willard school and Hyde Park High.

JESSIE FAUSET was born and educated in Philadelphia. She later went to Cornell University and remained long enough to earn a B.A. and a Phi Beta Kappa key. At the University of Pennsylvania she took another degree. Then came a period of teaching in the Dunbar High School in Washington, D. C. Later she served as literary editor of *The Crisis*. Interspersed through these activities was a good bit of European travel. She now lives in Montclair, New Jersey, and teaches French in the public schools of New

York City. Miss Fauset has written many poems, but she is perhaps more widely known for her novels, among them *There is Confusion*, *Plum Bun*, *The Chinaberry Tree* and *Comedy: American Style*.

GLADYS MAY CASELY HAYFORD (1904- ) was born at Axim on the African Gold Coast. Her mother was the daughter of the first Judge of the Excommission Court of Sierra Leone, and her father was one of the three first lawyers of the Gold Coast. She is by birth a Fanti, of the tribe which spreads from Axim on the Gold Coast down to Acera, but she attended Penrohs College, Colwyn Bay in Wales. Returning to Africa after five years in England, she became a schoolteacher in The Girls' Vocational School of Sierra Leone. Absence from her native land had increased her appreciation of the beauty of her people, and she came home convinced that she was meant to write for Africa. This she has done in poems like "Serving Girl" and other contributions to such magazines as *The Atlantic Monthly*.

FRANK HORNE (1899- ) had an early hankering to write, but it took the encouragement of a friendly editor and a fellow poet to bring him out in the open with it. His ambition was in prose, but his first success was in poetry. He was born in New York City. There he attended the public schools and the College of the City of New York. Readers of his poem "To James" will not be surprised to learn that he won varsity letters as a track man, chalked up a "10 flat" in the hundred yard dash and did the quarter mile in 51 seconds. His first poems were written during those days of athletic achievement. Frank Horne later attended the Northern Illinois College of Ophthalmology, took the degree Doctor of Optometry and practiced



in Chicago and New York. In later years he returned to graduate study, this time at the University of Southern California, and earned another doctorate. He won a *Crisis* poetry award with a group of poems in which "To James" was included. He has continued to contribute to various periodicals. At present he is an adviser on racial relations to the United States Housing Authority.

WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER HANDY (1873- ) is the "father of the blues." He was born in Florence, Alabama. There at the age of fifteen, wearing his father's Prince Albert, he got his start in a minstrel company. Since that day his name has become one of the great names in American music, thanks to such compositions as "Memphis Blues," "Beale Street Blues" and "St. Louis Blues." That he is also a poet is plain to anyone who remembers the words to his songs. He has two books to his credit: *Blues—An Anthology* and *Father of the Blues*, an autobiography.

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902- ) was born in Joplin, Missouri. He made his bow in literature as class poet in the eighth grade. By the time he was nineteen he had seen a poem of his translated into more than a dozen languages and reprinted scores of times throughout the world. That poem was "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." Several volumes of his poetry have been published since then. Upon these rests one of his two strong claims to fame. The other rests upon an amazingly colorful and eventful life, an indication of which may be gathered from the fact that when he set out to write his autobiography at the age of thirty-seven, he found that one volume wouldn't begin to contain it all. His education, often interrupted, included years at Central High in Cleveland, Columbia University in New York City and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. His

travels have carried him to four of the continents, not to mention a number of islands. He has won a hatful of prizes and awards and fellowships, and he has written moving picture scenarios, radio scripts, song lyrics and successful stage plays. His published books include *The Weary Blues*, *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, *The Dreamkeeper*, *Shakespeare in Harlem*, collections of poetry, and *Not Without Laughter*, *The Ways of White Folks* and *The Big Sea*, fiction and autobiography. He is co-author with Arna Bontemp of *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti*. Langston Hughes is a full-time poet. Even his letters and notes are likely to be in verse—the one that accompanied a group of poems to this anthology, for example:

Some of these for children,  
And some for older fry.  
You may take your choice  
Since you're as old as I.

DOROTHY VENA JOHNSON is a public schoolteacher in Los Angeles, the city in which she was born. In addition to her regular class work she teaches Journalism and Creative Poetry to various grades. Almost every issue of *Nuggets*, the bi-monthly magazine of poetry by and for children, carries the contributions of several of her pupils. Her own poems have appeared in anthologies. She was educated in Los Angeles, graduating from the University of Southern California and from Teachers' College of U. C. L. A.

FENTON JOHNSON (1888- ) has lived most of his life in Chicago, the city of his birth. There he attended public schools and the University of Chicago. After college he taught school one year before turning to the literary activities that have occupied him ever since. During this time he has written for the stage of the old Pekin Theatre of Chi-

cago, worked on newspapers and edited and published small magazines. His poems have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies over a number of years. The first collection of them, issued when Johnson was twenty-four, was called *A Little Dreaming*. This was followed by *Visions of the Dusk* and *Songs of the Soil*. There were also two books of prose: *Tales of Darkest America* and *For the Highest Good*.

GEORGIA DOUGLAS JOHNSON was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and educated in the schools of her home city, including Atlanta University, and at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio. After college she became a schoolteacher. Later, when her husband was appointed Recorder of Deeds under President Taft, she moved to Washington, D. C. There she continues to make her home. She has herself been connected with the Department of Labor and other government agencies in the capital. Her Washington home early became a place where young writers liked to gather on Saturday nights to recite new poems and discuss their work. Her career as a poet began with a childhood admiration for the poems of William Stanley Braithwaite. She has since published four volumes of her poems: *The Heart of a Woman*, *Bronze*, *An Autumn Love Cycle* and *The Dreams in Me*.

HELENE JOHNSON was born in Boston. She was educated in the public schools of that city and at Boston University. Later she took courses at Columbia University. She has been in New York periodically since 1926, when as a very young girl, she came down to the big city with a sheaf of poems in her hand. She has been published in magazines as hard to impress as *Vanity Fair*, and her poems have been reprinted widely in anthologies.

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON (1871-1938) once observed that his life seemed to move in cycles of seven. For seven years he and his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, were engaged in writing songs and musical plays for the stage. This was followed by a seven year period in which he served as United States Consul, first in Venezuela and then in Nicaragua. Then came two seven-year turns with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as field secretary and then as secretary. The final cycle, however, was broken tragically. James Weldon Johnson was a member of the faculty of Fisk University when he was killed in an automobile accident near his summer home in New England. But long before this accident occurred, he had established himself as one of America's great citizens. Born in Jacksonville, Florida, he had attended first the schools of that city and then Atlanta University. While serving as principal of a Jacksonville school and developing it into a high school, he had studied law and been admitted to the Florida bar. With his brother he had in those days written "Lift Every Voice and Sing," a song which was to become known as the Negro national anthem. He had then gone to New York and commenced the remarkable cycle of activities that made him famous. His books began appearing in 1912. They include *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, *Fifty Years and Other Poems*, *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, *The Second Book of American Negro Spirituals*, *Black Manhattan*, *God's Trombones*, *Along This Way* and *Negro Americans: What Now?*

CLAUDE MCKAY (1891- ) was born in the hills of Clarendon on the island of Jamaica, the youngest of eleven children. His father was a farmer who raised coffee, cocoa, bananas and sugar cane. An older brother was the village

schoolmaster. In this brother's school McKay received the rudiments of his education. In the teacher's home he made the acquaintance of some of the great figures in English literature. At seventeen he won a Jamaica Government Trade Scholarship and was apprenticed to a cabinet-maker and wheelwright. At nineteen he joined the Jamaica Constabulary. At twenty he published his first book of poems, *Songs of Jamaica*. Written in the Jamaica dialect, these at once became popular locally and earned him a medal from the Institute of Arts and Sciences. The next year he journeyed to the United States to attend Tuskegee Institute, but Tuskegee held him only three months. His next stop was Kansas State University, at which he remained two years as a student in the department of agriculture. Then he went to New York and presently gave up the thought of returning to the West Indies. It was about this time that America first became aware of Claude McKay the poet. He began contributing to widely read magazines. In 1919 he was off to Holland, Belgium and England. During a year in London he published *Spring in New Hampshire*. Back in America again, he was given an editorial job by Max Eastman of the *Liberator*. The same year Harcourt, Brace & Company brought out an American edition of his poems under the title *Harlem Shadows*. But McKay was off again, this time to Russia and Germany. He reached Paris at the end of 1923 and fell sick. His slow recovery was followed by a prolonged stay in France which was only recently terminated by a return to New York City. His books of prose include *Home to Harlem*, *Banjo*, *Gingertown*, *Banana Bottom*, *A Long Way From Home* and *Harlem: Black Metropolis*.

CORA BALL MOTON was born in Quincy, Illinois, the city in which she now lives. She went to public schools in Quincy and Chicago prior to attending Knox College and

Macomb Normal. For a number of years she taught school. She has traveled extensively throughout North America. With her husband, a former professor of mathematics, she now lives in a low cottage on a big expanse of green lawn. Around them grow the trees, hollyhocks and rose bushes that her mother planted many years ago. Advancing blindness has restricted her activities recently, but she still sees things that inspire poetry. She has written a great deal for newspapers and magazines.

BEATRICE M. MURPHY is perhaps best known for her anthology *Negro Voices*, but she is also a regular contributor of book columns to newspapers. She has been a private secretary to an educator, a public stenographer and manager and part owner of a circulating library. She was born in Pennsylvania, but most of her life has been spent in Washington, D. C.

MARY EFFIE LEE NEWSOME would rather not talk about how long it has been since she was a child. She needn't worry, though—considering what she has to remember. She was born in Philadelphia, where her father was editor of a colored newspaper. Later the family moved to Texas, the father having become a bishop. There Effie and her younger sister Consuelo learned to amuse themselves by hitching horned toads to match boxes. In nearby fields they discovered white poppies growing wild, and often they saw great droves of long-horned cattle being driven westward by men on horseback. Later there was another move, when Bishop B. F. Lee was transferred to the district which included Ohio, Pennsylvania and surrounding states. In Ohio the children found other wonders. There were horses to ride, and there was a little red school house with a loud bell on top. Naturally, Effie and Consuelo began writing

and drawing pictures to describe the things they saw and did. They sent their work to children's pages of magazines, and before long they were winning prizes. Mrs. Newsome has been contributing to magazines ever since, and most of the time she has been writing about that beautiful childhood. Her most recent book of poems is *Gladiola Garden*.

M. BEAUNURUS TOLESON was born in Moberly, Missouri. He attended Fisk, Lincoln and Columbia Universities. He has written much poetry, some of which has been published in newspapers and magazines. Several times his work has been awarded prizes. At present he is professor of English, Coach of Debating and Director of Dramatics at Wiley College, Marshall, Texas. His debating teams have won laurels in all parts of the country.

ARIEL WILLIAMS HOLLAWAY (1905- ) is the daughter of a Mobile, Alabama, physician. She attended public schools in her native city and then went to Talladega for College. Later she took a Mus. B. degree from Fisk University and followed this with musical studies at Oberlin Conservatory. She then became a director of music at North Carolina College for Negroes. Her poem "North-boun'" was on everybody's lips in Harlem during 1926, the year it won the *Opportunity* contest.





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